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EPA SCIENTISTS DEVELOP TECHNOLOGY FOR DETECTION OF DANGEROUS MOLDS

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Two EPA scientists have developed an innovative way to detect potentially dangerous molds much faster and with more accuracy. The new technology can be used to detect the mold Stachybotrys, commonly known as "black mold" and more than 50 other possibly problematic molds.

Molds typically grow in buildings affected by water damage and have been found in homes, hospitals, schools, and office buildings. It is estimated that about 50 to l00 common indoor mold types have the potential for creating health problems. Exposure to mold has been identified as a potential cause of many health problems including asthma, sinusitis, and infections. It is also believed that molds play a major role in cases of sick building syndrome and related illnesses.

Drs. Stephen J. Vesper and Richard Haugland at the EPA Office of Research and Development, National Exposure Research laboratory in Cincinnati, Ohio have developed a DNA-based system that allows rapid identification and quantification of molds in a matter of hours. Current methodologies require days or weeks to identify molds before remedial action can be taken. With the new technology, up to 96 analyses can be run simultaneously by laboratory technicians, reducing the labor required to analyze samples while significantly increasing the accuracy and validity of the analysis. The new technology also enables scientists to make risk assessments by identifying which mold is present and in what numbers.

In recognition of their work in developing the technology, the EPA scientists received the prestigious Federal Laboratory Consortium Award for Excellence in Technology Transfer. They were in competition with researchers from all the Federal laboratories.

Technology is being introduced by the Environmental Technology Commercialization Center, headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, one of the agency's technology transfer centers that assists U.S. industries in the licensing of EPA technologies. The technology is available for licensing on a non-exclusive basis by laboratories, indoor air quality specialists, or other environmental professionals. Aerotech Laboratories, Inc., a small Arizona business, is the first licensee under this government patent.

Additional information on molds is available at http://www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/index.html.

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